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Toase's History of the
Methodyan Mission in France

1835

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History

THE
WESLEYAN MISSION
IN
FRANCE.

By William Toase.

As the doctrines and discipline of Wesleyan Methodism were first made known to the inhabitants of the coast of Normandy by the occasional visits of members of the French societies in the Channel Islands, a brief account of the origin of Methodism in those islands may not be thought out of place here, as an introduction to the following sketch of the Wesleyan Mission in France.

Guernsey and Jersey became an interesting scene of labour for Ministers in the Methodist Connexion through a providential circumstance worthy of being recorded. In the year 1779, several persons from the Island of Jersey were engaged in the fishing trade on the banks of Newfoundland. Some of those persons attended the ministry of the Rev. Lawrence Coughland, who had the pastoral charge of a congregation belonging to Lady Huntingdon's Connexion at St. John's, the principal town in that island.

Under his ministry, many were deeply convinced of sin, and truly converted to God. On their return to Jersey, they made known, both in public and private, the good which had resulted from the labours of that zealous and faithful servant of Jesus Christ. About this time, the Captain of a trading vessel from Poole in Dorsetshire, preached on almost every visit to St. Helier's. At his instance, a blind man from Poole was induced to visit the little congregation which had been gathered in that town, and to reside among them for a short time as a stated Preacher. By these means, a number of persons became earnestly concerned for their salvation, and began to devote themselves sincerely to God. This last Preacher being obliged to return to England, the infant society was kept together by the pious labours of Messieurs Le Sueur and Kingston, who had become Exhorters.

In a regiment which was at this time ordered from England to Jersey, there were a few pious soldiers, who had heard the Gospel under the preaching of Captain Webb, at Winchester and Southampton. Finding, on their arrival in Jersey, but little spiritual help, they asked the few serious friends, with whom they soon became acquainted, if they were willing to receive a Preacher from the Rev. John Wesley's Connexion, provided one could be obtained. To this they cheerfully agreed. The soldiers, therefore,

wrote immediately to Mr. Jasper Winscombe, a Local Preacher at Winchester, entreating him to lay their case before Mr. Wesley, and solicit his assistance.

At the very time when Mr. Winscombe's letter reached Mr. Wesley, Robert Carr Brackenbury, Esq., a gentleman of fortune, piety, and liberality, who was a Preacher in Mr. Wesley's Connexion, happened to be on a short excursion with that venerable servant of God. Mr. Wesley laid the letter before Mr. Brackenbury, who, being acquainted with the French language, considered this as a call from God, and immediately offered his services. The offer was accepted; and in the month of December, 1783, he was commended to the grace of God for this work by the society, at the City-road chapel, and proceeded without delay to Southampton, from whence he sailed for Jersey.

Mr. Brackenbury began his ministry in a house on the sea side; but soon afterwards he removed the congregation to a large room in his own house in the town. The little company who had embraced the truth, were not quite agreed among themselves on some minor points of doctrine. But, at a love-feast held at St. Helier's, all differences of opinion were swallowed up in the overflowings of divine love and fraternal affection; and French and English, in their respective tongues, unanimously declared the won-

derful works of God. Amidst riots, and much fiery persecution, the work prospered, and soon spread into the country parts of the island. At an early period of his residence in Jersey, Mr. Brackenbury paid a visit to Guernsey, and was instrumental in introducing the Wesleyan ministry into that island also.

In the year 1785 the Rev. Dr. Coke visited Jersey; and, on the recommendation of Mr. Brackenbury, invited a respectable young man, a native of that island, who was converted to God, and had begun to preach, to go on a mission to Guernsey. During this visit, Dr. Coke passed over to the latter island, where he preached with considerable success, and formed the first class, consisting of about twelve members. Mr. De Quetteville arrived in Guernsey on the 18th of February, 1785. For nearly half a century, this venerable man has laboured “through good report and evil report,” in his beautiful native isles; and few men have been more honoured of God in the awakening of sinners, or more useful in building up the church of Christ in the faith of the Gospel, than the pious and zealous De Quetteville. His excellent volume of hymns are sung with delight in all our French congregations, and his many other publications are esteemed and read with profit by thousands.

The late Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke, then in the commencement of his ministerial labour, was

appointed by the Conference of 1786 to join Mr. Brackenbury. The persecutions he endured, the personal indignities he suffered, and the success with which his labours were crowned, are all before the public in his own words, and need not be repeated here.

The islands were honoured, in August, 1787, with a visit from the Rev. John Wesley, accompanied by Dr. Coke. By contrary winds, they were obliged to put in at the Island of Alderney, where, on the 14th of that month, Mr. Wesley preached. In his Journal, Mr. Wesley says, under the above date, "After a very pleasant passage, through little islands on either hand, we came to the venerable castle, (Castle Cornet), standing on a rock, about a quarter of a mile from Guernsey. The isle itself makes a beautiful appearance, spreading as a crescent to the right and left, about seven miles long, and five broad; part high land, and part low." From the 14th of August to the 1st of September, that servant of God, in the eighty-fourth year of his age, continued preaching and exhorting from house to house, and sailing from island to island, with all the zeal and vigour of earlier years. In the De Jersey family, at Mon Plaisir, he was received with the kindest affection; the people assembled by hundreds to hear his words; even the Governor entertained him at his table; and multitudes were edified by his ministry. Speak-

ing of his two last sermons in Guernsey, he says, " I was offered the use of the assembly-room, a spacious chamber in the market-place, which would contain, at least, thrice as many as our former room. I preached at six to such a congregation as I had not seen here before ; and the word seemed to sink deep into their hearts." Again he says, and this was the last time he preached in Guernsey, " I strongly exhorted a very genteel congregation, such as I have rarely seen in England, to ask for the old paths, and walk therein."

No part of the extensive field of ministerial labour cultivated by the Wesleyan Ministers, has been more fruitful than the Channel Islands. From a very small beginning the work has gradually spread, until nearly every parish in Guernsey, Jersey, Alderney, and Sark, has its commodious chapel, and numerous congregation. The Connexion now numbers, in the French societies, two thousand, two hundred, and fifteen ; and in the English societies, seven hundred and fifty persons, as its accredited members. " Behold what God hath wrought !" From these islands, as the Rev. John Wesley himself believed it would do, Methodism has now spread into France.

The Reformation was established in Germany, and in a great part of Switzerland, while in France the number of its proselytes was small. Luther

and Calvin lent it their aid, and it penetrated into every part of the kingdom. Francis I. did his utmost to arrest its progress. Soft and conciliating measures on the one hand, and the most violent persecutions on the other, were alike in vain. The work of reformation still went on. But, as yet, the newly formed churches had no moral bond of union. Fiery persecution prevailed, and the whole kingdom reeked with the blood of the Reformed. Under these circumstances, an assembly, composed of deputies from all the Reformed Churches in France, met on the 25th of May, 1559, in the city of Paris. In four days they drew up a Confession of Faith, and laid the foundation of an ecclesiastical form of government. The national Synods, which were held successively, from 1559 to 1660, made those changes and improvements which circumstances required. The whole discipline of their churches contained, at first, only forty articles, whereas that which was drawn up in 1660, consists of two hundred and twenty-two!

After various persecuting edicts, and a state of suffering on the part of the Reformed Church, unparalleled in the history of civilized nations, the edict of Nantes was passed. This event occurred in April, 1598, and was registered the 25th of February, 1599. From that period, to the year 1610, the churches had rest, and full liberty to profess their religion.

But by various persecuting acts, for about twenty-five years after the death of Cardinal Mazarin, which took place on the 25th of March, 1661, the Protestant cause verged fast towards its fall. Flattered by his Confessor, Pere de la Chaise, and encouraged by his confidential Minister Louvois, Louis XIV. vainly hoped to reunite every heretic in his dominions to the Catholic church. The edict of Nantes was revoked, and all France was covered with dismay and despair. Thousands were burnt at the stake, racked on the wheel, or executed on gibbets; and as many, at least, perished by the fatigues of emigration. Multitudes were arrested, and committed to the dungeons. Places of concealment were crowded. When these failed, the miserable exiles, under bales of merchandize, in casks, or amid heaps of stores in a ship, or in the skiff of a fisherman, attempted the hazardous voyage to the English shore. Some suffered shipwreck; and the fate of others was unknown. Numbers were taken by corsairs, and endured many years of slavery in Africa. It is supposed, that not less than fifty thousand passed over to England. Some of those who remained found safety in the fastnesses of the Cevennes, from whence their descendents are now extending their voices to the religious public in England, saying, "Come over and help us." The Bibles and Testaments that were, on one oc-

occasion, destroyed at Mentz, occupied twelve hours in burning! Nevertheless, by the good providence of God, a sufficient number of copies was preserved for family worship. During these awful times, 5500 livres were offered for the capture of a Protestant Pastor. There were, however, many zealous Ministers of the cross, who did not cease to visit their scattered flocks in disguise. Deeply rooted piety, which the fire of persecution rendered more fervent, procured them guides to conduct them, and hosts to receive and shelter them. The interior of forests, and the caverns of mountains, became the august temples where the faithful assembled to hear the word of God, to sing His praises, and to receive the holy sacrament. These people continued to keep alive among them the great principles of the Reformation, until the reign of Louis XVI., when they obtained a legal existence.*

The Revolution produced a great change in the political and ecclesiastical affairs of France. A century before it took place, an attempt to violate the shred of a Priest's garment would have been deemed the highest impiety. But that period passed away; and a new set of philosophers, taking advantage of the corruptions which had gradually crept into the church, until they amounted to a fearful mass, easily persuaded

* Vide Smedley on the Reformation in France.

the people not to bewilder themselves with "teasing perplexities, and inextricable mysteries of theology, but to 'look through nature up to nature's God.'" An elegant writer on the French Revolution says, "The pernicious dogmas of the schools captivated the attention, and were conveyed to the heart, in the enchanting page of a novel, amidst the feigned adventures and passionate endearments of lovers. An article of faith was exposed in an epigram; scepticism allured proselytes by a bon mot; and creeds were confuted in a song. The luminous and scrutinizing genius of Montesquieu; the splendid levity of Voltaire; the impassioned and facinating eloquence of Rousseau; the precision and depth of D'Alembert; the bold and acute investigation of Boulanger; the daring paradoxical spirit of Helvetius; the majestic sublimity of the systematic Buffon; the profound anatomical researches of Bailey; the captivating elegance of Marmontel; the impressive condensed thought of Diderot; all these, with combined force, assailed and unsettled the opinions of ages. The sacred office was laid low; and the madness of democracy vainly dedicated a temple to liberty on its ruins."*

The revolutionary madness of the people began at length to grow calm; the champions of atheism

* Courtenay.

were constrained to make a retrograde motion; and they solemnly proclaimed to the French people the existence of a Supreme Being! Liberty of worship was proclaimed by the National Assembly; and the Protestant people again rejoiced in hope of the enjoyment of the constitutional principles of their churches, which they had received from their ancestors.

It was in the course of the summer of the year 1790, that some of the members of the French Methodist society in Guernsey began to direct their attention to France. The Rev. John De Quetteville, Mr. John Angel, and others, visited several villages on the coast of Normandy. Mr. Angel, in one of his visits to Courcelle on business, happened to spend a sabbath at that place. Hearing of a small congregation of Protestants, who assembled in that town for religious worship, he attended their morning meeting. One of the elders read the lessons for the day, and a sermon from one of their approved authors; the smaller congregations not being favoured with the labours of their Pastor more than two or three times in a year. Mr. Angel attended again in the afternoon, when the congregation consisted exclusively of females.

Mr. Angel was invited to read, which he at first declined, as his knowledge of the language was very imperfect. The request was repeated with increased earnestness, and he at last con-

sented. The passage which he read was the conversation of our Lord with the woman of Samaria. Having read it, he proceeded to give an account of his own conversion to God, and his experience in divine things, when a female rose up, and said, "For forty years I have been persecuted for my religion; but I never knew before this day what the nature of true religion is." Mr. Angel asked them if they were disposed to receive a Preacher to reside among them. They readily acceded to the proposal, and began to look forward to the arrival of a spiritual guide with anxious solicitude. In the mean time, other villages were visited by Mr. De Quetteville, and preaching and religious conversations were begun among the people. The way being thus prepared, the late Mr. William Mahy, a Local Preacher of the Guernsey Circuit, was appointed to this new station by the Conference, and was solemnly set apart to this work, by ordination, by the Rev. Dr. Coke, during a visit which the Doctor and Mr. De Quetteville paid to that neighbourhood. A letter had been written from Paris to Lady Huntingdon, requesting her Ladyship to send a Preacher to that city, as there was a prospect of doing good to many who were anxious for such an appointment. Lady Huntingdon was dead, and no Preacher was sent. Dr. Coke thought this to be a favourable opportunity, and a call of Divine

Providence, to establish a Mission in Paris. On the 23d of September, 1791, Dr. Coke, accompanied by the Rev. John De Quetteville and Mr. Gibson of Manchester, embarked for France. They landed at Renneville the same day. After visiting an aged Marquis, who was confined to his bed with gout, and praying with him, they went on foot to Coutances, a distance of about five miles. The following day, they proceeded to Courcelle, in which place Mr. Mahy was stationed. At this place, Dr. Coke ordained Mr. Mahy; and afterwards proceeded, with Mr. De Quetteville and Mr. Gibson, to the metropolis. On the third day, after leaving Courcelle, they arrived in Paris. They soon found the persons who had written the letter to Lady Huntingdon, who proved to be two English schoolmasters. The Doctor immediately hired a room for a month; but as this room could not be occupied immediately, on visiting a suppressed Church, which was then to be sold for £120, and which would contain two thousand persons, he engaged to purchase it, not doubting that it would soon be crowded.

The hired room, which was situated close by the river Seine, was prepared. Mr. De Quetteville preached the first sermon; but, to the mortification of himself and his companions, not more than thirty-six persons were present, in which number were the two schoolmasters and their families.

“On concluding his discourse, Mr. De Quetteville informed the congregation, that on the following day the Rev. Thomas Coke, of the University of Oxford, would read a sermon of his own composition in the French tongue. When the time arrived, they could procure no more than six hearers. It soon appeared that the motives of the schoolmasters were not of the purest kind. Their school was reduced to a low condition; and they wanted to resort to some expedient that should raise its reputation, and increase the number of their pupils. They hoped for an orator who would excite public attention, and awaken in the minds of the rising generation a desire to learn the English language. Dr. Coke was now anxious to revoke, upon honourable terms, the bargain that had been made for the church; and through the kind assistance of Miss M. Freeman Shepherd, a lady who had known something of Dr. Coke in England, and who, to escape the dangers of the Revolution, had retired as a boarder into a convent, he found no difficulty in retracing his former steps. No money was demanded. Attending a few times at the office, to ratify by his signature the various formalities, was all that was required. Finding that the French were too much enamoured with their Revolution, and too much enlightened by their new philosophy, to regard either the truths of Christianity, or the

salvation of their souls, Dr. Coke and Mr. Gibson returned to England."*

In Normandy the people began to flock to hear Mr. Mahy in great numbers, and many were awakened and converted to God, especially in the villages of Courcelle, Cresson, Beuville, and Périères. The labours of Mr. Mahy were soon extended to Condé, a large town, distant from Beuville thirty-five miles. The Protestant churches at St. Honorine, Athis, Montilly, Frène, Chefrène, and Mont Tabor, all shared in the benefit of his ministerial and pastoral labours.

In all these places much good was done ; and now, after a lapse of more than thirty years, the fruits of his ministry remain. Mr. Mahy travelled and preached with indefatigable zeal. He baptized, married, and administered the Lord's supper, as an authorized Minister of Christ. The elders of the churches began to consult how they might best raise a regular salary for his support, arrange the plan of itinerancy, purchase a horse for his use, and fix the times and places of preaching. Most of the Priests having either suffered death, or fled from their country, numbers of Roman Catholics attended his ministry, and heard his discourses with marked approbation. The Consistory of Caën was the only one

* Drew's Life of Dr. Coke, page 239.

in all that country which refused him the use of the Protestant church. Unwilling to leave the vast population of so large a town without some proportion of his labours, Mr. Mahy rented a room, in which he preached to a large congregation, consisting chiefly of Roman Catholics, "who heard the word of God gladly." At this time, there were in the neighbourhood of Caën about one hundred persons in society, many of whom had experienced a "new birth unto righteousness," and brought forth the "fruits of the Spirit."

Such was the promising state of this infant cause, when the Pastor of the church at Caën began to declare himself an enemy to Mr. Mahy, and to the doctrines and discipline of Methodism. Monsieur D —— being regarded as the Superintendent, or Bishop of all the churches in that arrondissement, with a tone of authority he addressed a long circular to the Elders of each church, in which he represented the Methodists as the vilest of people, and the most ignorant of enthusiasts and fanatics; resembling very much, he said, the bigoted Monks of former times. He did not scruple to say, that, by a hypocritical show of religion, they plundered the people of their property, and caused divisions and strifes in every family to which they had access. "Wesley himself," said he, "the founder of their sect, is known to have stolen a gold repeater from a

lady at whose house he lodged ; and as to his followers, *they have all been banished out of England!*" He therefore commanded his people to have nothing to do with such persons ; nor by any means to suffer them to preach in their churches. " If, however," added he, " they still attempt to preach among you, send the rogues to the Consistory of Caën, and we shall know how to dispose of them."

Prejudice began now to take deep root ; and the Protestants, who had themselves been the subjects of the most fiery persecutions, became infuriated against Mr. Mahy and his followers. The room at Beuville, in which they met for religious worship, belonged to an elderly man of the name of Jaques Martin, whose son and three daughters had joined the society. To this room one of the Elders came, to forbid Mr. Mahy the use of it. The good old man rose up, and said, " The room is mine ; I have never heard or seen any thing but good in Mr. Mahy ; and I am determined to stand by him, and those who will join with me are welcome." The torch of war was now lighted up. The people began to quarrel about the books that were used in the service, in which they had an equal right ; and loud voices, hard speeches, and much confusion followed. The dispute about the books, however, was soon settled, as the disaffected were willing to receive the amount of the interest

they had in them in money. From Cressons, Mr. Mahy was totally ejected. At Périères there was but little disturbance, though even there many ceased to meet in class.

During these agitations in the villages of Beuville and Cressons, Mr. Mahy visited Condé, a populous town, thirty miles distant from Caën. Notwithstanding the influence of Monsieur D's letter, in that place also the word took effect; but especially at Montilly and Frène, two villages in the neighbourhood of Condé. Not long after this, Monsieur D. became embarrassed in his temporal affairs, through extensive speculations in a lottery, and retired to the south of France, where he died.

The successor of Monsieur D. was Monsieur S., a zealous Buonapartist, whose attachment to the cause of Napoleon on his return from Elba, obliged him to take refuge in the Island of Guernsey, when the King again took possession of the throne. About this time, the mind of Mr. Mahy became so painfully affected, as to disqualify him for the work of the ministry, and the proper discharge of the duties of the pastoral office. There can be little doubt that the vexations he experienced from the tempers and dispositions of men so different from himself, together with his long separation from his Christian friends in the islands, by a protracted war, preyed on his spirits to such a degree, that it ended in insanity.

In this state of mind, it was much to be desired that he should be removed to Guernsey, his native place. But the war was then raging in all its fury, and the attempt seemed to be hopeless. Repeated applications were made by his amiable and pious wife and his friends to Napoleon, who, for a considerable time, did not listen to their prayer. At length, chiefly through the influence of Monsieur S., he was permitted to embark on board a licensed vessel for Guernsey. Soon after his arrival among his friends, it was found necessary to place him under proper medical treatment, and for that purpose he was sent to England. He died near Manchester, in the year 1812. His last words were, "My only hope is in the mercy of God."

Among the thousands who fled before the terrors of the French Revolution, was Monsieur Pierre du Pontavice, a French Nobleman, of an illustrious family in Brittany. He, with many others, found his way to the Island of Jersey. In that island he became acquainted with the Rev. R. Reece and other Wesleyan Ministers, who were then on that station. Under their ministry he was powerfully convinced of sin, and began earnestly to seek the salvation of his soul. Travelling afterwards with Dr. Coke, he visited Sheffield; and while the late Rev. William Bramwell and others were engaged in prayer in his behalf, he was brought into the

glorious liberty of the Gospel. Having experienced so great a change in his own soul, he felt an earnest desire for the salvation of others; and soon afterwards believed himself called to the Christian ministry. Passing through the usual forms, he was accepted by the Conference on trial, and received his first appointment to the islands of Guernsey and Jersey, where he lived in the warmest affections of the people, and laboured among them with considerable success, till the year 1802, when he returned to his native country.

Animated with a holy zeal for the salvation of his countrymen, after paying a short visit to his family, he proceeded to Beuville and Périères, where he was received by the societies in those villages as an angel from heaven. Having taken with him a number of religious books, especially the works of Fletcher, Monsieur du Pontavice spent much of his time in translating them into French, and in reading them to the people while they were employed, in little groups, making lace, as well as in relating to them various valuable anecdotes of what he had seen and heard in his travels relative to the work of God. And to this day they retain and relate a rich collection of them. This eminent servant of Christ continued to preach, pray, and converse among the people, until his very soul was knit to them in bonds of the purest and most ardent

Christian love. To open his way to a more extensive field of usefulness, he and his friends thought it expedient that he should take orders in the Protestant Church, and accept the little flock at Bolbec as his more immediate charge. He did not, however, forsake his beloved friends at Beuville and Périères, but frequently visited them; and by his labours among them kept alive that genuine spirit of piety which was revived and fostered under the ministry of Mr. Mahy. After about eight years of incessant labour, he was taken ill of consumption, and went over from Bolbec to Beuville, as he said, "to die among my beloved friends." In his last illness he was highly honoured of God, and his triumphant death made an impression on the minds of the people which will never be forgotten. The heavenly influence which pervaded his soul was such, that he would not allow anything to be said to him which did not relate to that heaven to which he was going. When the friends said, "What shall we do when you are taken from us?" his answer was, "You know the way of salvation; only be faithful, and all will be well."

After lingering two months, he died, on the 1st of December, 1810, in the full triumph of faith, aged forty years. He is buried in a garden belonging to one of the Friends, where a monument, with an appropriate inscription, is erected

to his memory. To this day Monsieur du Pontavice is spoken of with profound respect and love.

Twenty years had elapsed since Dr. Coke visited Paris. His first efforts had been unsuccessful; and a protracted war prevented him from renewing his attempt. It is not a little remarkable, that just when the Wesleyan ministry became suspended in France, in consequence of the affliction of Mr. Mahy, and the death of Monsieur du Pontavice, divine Providence opened our way, most unexpectedly, to the prison ships on the river Medway, and afterwards to many other depôts.

When stationed in the Sevenoaks Circuit, I received an invitation from Captain Simmons, commander of the *Glory*, a prison ship in the river Medway, to preach to the French prisoners under his care. On the 6th of March, 1810, accompanied by a friend from Maidstone, I went on board to ascertain the dispositions of the prisoners on this subject. The number of men and boys confined on board that ship I found to be upwards of a thousand, chiefly French. At the request of the Commander I went below, and conversed with several, both Officers and privates, who heard me with attention, and gladly accepted the religious books which I took with me for distribution among them. This being Shrove Tuesday, the Catholics were enjoying themselves, as far as their limited cir-

cumstances would allow them to do, their church forbidding the use of animal food for six weeks to come. If ever I beheld a scene of distress it was this morning. Ignorance of all religion, depravity of heart and life, and misery, in almost all its forms, appeared throughout this ship. Having promised to preach to them in their own language the following day, I returned home meditating on the novel circumstances in which I had that day been placed, and in forming plans of usefulness for the future.

March 7th, 1810. This morning, accompanied by Dr. Hulett, Mr. Bonniwell, Mr. Theobald, the late Mr. Flashman, and a young gentleman, who is now a popular Clergyman in the Church of England, with a select number of Dr. Hulett's pupils, I went on board the *Glory*. Our arrival was welcomed by Captain Simmons and his family. I immediately began the service on deck, by singing a French hymn and prayer. I then read the third chapter of St. John's Gospel, and preached from, "By grace are ye saved, through faith." The congregation was large, and the greater part of them heard the word with attention; and some with tears. At the close of the service, many expressed their gratitude for this act of Christian charity, and earnestly requested me to visit them again. A French Officer sent me a note, requesting the loan of a Bible in Latin, French, or English.

From this time I visited the prisoners on board the *Glory* as often as the duties of my Circuit would allow me, generally once a week, till the 27th of May following; when an order came from the Commissary to forbid my preaching any more. From that date to June 11th, 1811, no public preaching was permitted. There was nothing, however, in the order to prevent my visiting the ship; hence I continued to embrace every opportunity of privately conversing with the prisoners, and of distributing among them many copies of the New Testament, and hundreds of religious tracts. During this period, I have reason to believe, good was done.

Various means were employed to obtain permission of the Transport Board to recommence my public labours in the *Glory*, but without success. The late Joseph Butterworth, Esq., entered very heartily into this cause, and did all he could to procure me a license to renew my ministerial functions in this promising sphere of usefulness. In a letter now before me, bearing date "London, 3d of June, 1810," that gentleman says, "There is no hope of your being allowed publicly to preach on board the prison ships; but there is nothing to prevent you from going on board to distribute tracts and Testaments, and holding religious conversations with individuals, which may be more effectual in doing good than preaching, though less ostentatious.

A personal direct application may do more execution than a bow drawn at a venture from a pulpit."

At length I laid the case before Dr. Coke, who immediately addressed a letter to the Earl of Liverpool on the subject; of which letter the following is a copy:—

" City-road, May 24th, 1811.

" MY LORD,

" MR. TOASE, one of Mr. Wesley's Preachers, stationed at Sevenoaks, in Kent, did, about a year ago, frequently visit the French prisoners on board the *Glory*, which lies in the River Medway. Captain Simmons the commander of the ship, who is a religious man, gave Mr. Toase full liberty to instruct them. There were on board the *Glory* about one thousand prisoners when Mr. Toase preached to them; there are now, I am informed, about nine hundred. He had large congregations to hear him, many of whom were affected under his preaching; and a few, he had reason to believe, became serious. Mr. Toase received from the British and Foreign Bible Society a considerable number of Bibles and Testaments, and also French tracts from other quarters. After he had distributed them among the prisoners, he found that they were read with avidity and pleasure.

But, my Lord, an order came from a superior Officer, prohibiting him from preaching any longer. Since that time, which is about a year ago, he has,

my Lord, received many letters from the prisoners, some of whom, if I do not mistake the account which Mr. Toase gave me, are French Officers ; all of them expressing the deep regret they feel at the loss of his ministerial services. Now, my Lord, I shall take it as a great favour, if your Lordship will honour me with a letter, or will write to the Commissary, or to Captain Simmons, directing that Mr. Toase shall have liberty to preach to the French prisoners, and to pray with them at such times and in such manner as Captain Simmons shall from time to time judge proper.

“ I have the honour to be, my Lord,

“ Your Lordship’s very humble servant,

T. COKE.”

To the Earl of Liverpool, &c. &c.

Copy of a note from the Secretary of the Earl of Liverpool, to Mr. M’Clay, at the Transport Board :—

“ MR. Peel presents his compliments to Mr. M’Clay, and is desired by the Earl of Liverpool to transmit to him the enclosed letter from Dr. Coke, and to request of Mr. M’Clay, to inform him, whether the Transport Board have received any communications on the subject of it; and whether there appears to be any material objection to permit Mr. Toase to visit the French prisoners on board the Glory.”

Copy of a letter from Mr. M’Clay to Captain Hutchinson, Commissary, &c. &c. :—

"Transport Office, May 27th, 1811.

"SIR,

"I am directed by the Board, to transmit to you the enclosed copy of a note from Mr. Peel, as also a copy of the letters referred to ; and I am to desire you to report the reason for Mr. Toase having been prevented visiting the French prisoners in your custody, in order to communicate to them religious instruction.

"I am, Sir,

"Your most obedient servant,

"ALEXANDER M'CLAY."

Captain Hutchinson, R.N., Chatham.

Order from the Board.

"Transport office, June 1st, 1811.

"The Minister referred to by you, Mr. Toase, may be allowed to perform divine service to the prisoners, as long as there is no impropriety in his discourses or conduct."

To the Rev. Dr. Coke.

This order from the Transport Board, almost unexpected, was received with joy and gratitude, both by myself and the prisoners ; and I cheerfully embraced every opportunity of preaching to them up to the Conference of 1811.

At this Conference, unknown to me, a petition was prepared, and signed by about fifty of the prisoners, Officers and privates, on board the *Glory*, requesting that I might be appointed to

preach to them the ensuing year. The prayer of the petition was granted; and I was appointed accordingly. A few very brief extracts from my journal will show the nature of the work, and the encouragement we received, from time to time, to persevere in it.

“*Sept. 4, 1811.* This morning, according to the appointment of Conference, I proceeded to my work on board the *Glory*. Many hundreds rejoiced at my return; and seemed anxious once more to hear “the Gospel of the grace of God.” I began now to observe three distinct classes among the prisoners. A considerable number who were as careless as they were ignorant of true religion; many more who were superstitiously attached to the rites of the Roman Catholic Church; and not a few who heard the unmixed truths of Christianity with deep feeling. After the service, a young man very earnestly begged the favour of a Bible for himself and one for his brother. When I exhorted him to read it with attention and prayer, he replied with great emphasis, “*Oui, Monsieur; oui, Monsieur.*”

“*Sept. 22.* On my arrival on board, I found all the prisoners confined below, on account of a forgery that had been committed on the Bank of England, by one or more of them. The Commander was determined to keep them all under deck, until they delivered up the criminal, or

criminals. When this was done, I was thankful to find that not one of those who had favoured our Mission was found among the guilty persons.

“ *Oct. 3.* Arrived a French Commodore, and ninety-eight men, who had been taken prisoners in one of the *prâmes* off Bologne. This circumstance rather interrupted our worship, nevertheless I preached; and none were more attentive than the newly-arrived prisoners.

“ *Oct. 6.* In the hospital, I visited an elderly Dutch woman, whom I found reading a single leaf of a Dutch Bible, which she had discovered at the bottom of her chest. She and her husband had been out fishing, and were taken by an English ship. They had left four little children at home. I intimated this morning, that I expected to obtain permission to preach on board all the prison ships on the Medway; when many voices replied, ‘If so, we hope the Glory will always have your first attention.’

“ *Oct. 24.* A proposition was made on board the Glory, to form small circulating libraries in each ship. The French Officers promised to superintend them. A few rules were drawn up, and pasted in each book. The books consisted of Bibles, Testaments, and religious tracts, in the French, German, Italian, Dutch, and Spanish languages. This little institution is likely to do much good, as it will supply a great many

readers with the means of acquiring religious knowledge; and perhaps the books will be more generally read than they would be, were they given to the men. About this time, I presented a New Testament to the afflicted Dutch woman, mentioned above, who was so much delighted with the gift, that she read it through in three days. Soon after this, similar libraries were instituted in all the ships, and were continued to the end of the war."

Hitherto my labours had been confined to the *Glory*; but on application being made again to Lord Liverpool, for permission to visit the other nine prison-ships in the Medway, the following letter was received.

" Downing-street, October, 1811.

" SIR,

In reference to your letter of the 20th inst., I have Lord Liverpool's directions to acquaint you that his Lordship took the earliest opportunity of expressing his wish to the Commissioners for conducting the Transport Service, that permission should be given to Messrs. Toase, De Kerpezdron, and Le Sueur, to preach to the French prisoners in the different prisons in this country, provided the Board had no objections. In the letter which has been received in reply from the Commissioners, it is stated that serious inconvenience might arise from the grant of an unrestricted license to preach to the French prisoners. I am therefore desired by his Lordship to re-

quest, in compliance with the suggestion of the Commissioners, that you will have the goodness to specify to his Lordship those dépôts and ships to which the persons above named are most desirous of obtaining admittance.

“ I have the honour to be, Sir,

“ Your most obedient humble servant,

“ ROBERT PEELE.”

Dr. Coke.

Oct. 31. An order came from the Transport Board, granting us full liberty to preach on board all the ships on the Medway; as also to visit other dépôts at Portsmouth, Plymouth, Dartmore, and Stapleton.

The sphere of our labours was now enlarged from one to ten ships, so that it was necessary to have additional labourers. About five years before this time, Monsieur Armand De Kerpezdron, a French gentleman, who had been converted to God, and had become a Local Preacher in the Island of Jersey, was fixed upon as a proper person to preach to his countrymen in prison. On the 30th of November, M. De Kerpezdron arrived at Chatham; and in a few days he began his ministerial work, in which he continued with indefatigable zeal till the arrival of peace, when he went into a regular Circuit in Jersey, and afterwards became a Missionary in France. He is now settled as Pastor of the Protestant church at Mer, near Orleans;

where his labours have been acceptable and useful among a people who, for many years, had been destitute of a Minister.

I cannot here overlook the valuable assistance we received, especially among the Danish and American prisoners, from the late Rev. Walter Griffith; and from Dr. Hulett and Mr. Bonniwell, both Local Preachers on the Rochester plan, who were always ready to this good work.

Occasionally, cartels sailed from the Medway to France with invalids and others, who obtained their liberty. On these occasions, we always sent copies of the Scriptures to be distributed by them when they arrived at home. As a specimen, I select the following notes from my journal.

“ *Tuesday, Nov. 26.*—Twenty-eight invalids were sent home this day. I gave them twenty-eight Testaments, six Bibles, and several religious tracts for distribution. The Surgeon who accompanied them took four Bibles, which he promised to give to four poor families in France.

“ *Jan. 19, 1812.*—I was much gratified this morning to hear from Monsieur De Kerpezdron, that the assistant Surgeon of the Canada had received good under our ministry, and has expressed a wish to join our society. To God be all the praise!

“ *24th.*—Died ———, a Dutch boy, about seventeen years of age, I believe in peace. This youth was a great sufferer. For many weeks,

he endured the most excruciating pain, from a swelling in the knee. At length it was found necessary to amputate the leg. In his affliction, he became an earnest seeker of salvation. He was anxious to read the New Testament in his own language. In a few days, I took a copy of that precious book to him as he lay in his bed. When he saw it, he burst into a flood of tears. This Testament was his constant companion; and, after his death, it was found under his pillow.

“*March 22d.*—This morning, the word appeared to make a deep impression on the minds of my hearers. After the benediction was pronounced, they did not seem inclined to separate. An Officer said, “O that I had it in my power to contribute to this good work!” And then he added, “I am happy to inform you that your mission gains ground.” On board the *Trusty*, the first thing that attracted my attention was a poor dying man, engaged devoutly in reading his Bible, as he lay on his couch gasping for breath. When it was announced that the Minister was come, numbers came up from the lower ward on crutches, to hear that word of salvation which gives life, and health, and peace to all that receive it.

“*May 3.*—This afternoon, one hundred and thirty-five prisoners of war, chiefly aged men

and invalids, were sent home. Monsieur De Kerpezdron and myself went on board to take our leave of them, especially of such as had attended our ministry. We had prepared a parcel for each man, containing a Testament and a few tracts, which they received with eagerness and gratitude. If we had never before this day seen any fruit of our labours, what we have just witnessed is sufficient to encourage our hopes, and excite us to more vigorous exertions. We have cast our bread upon the waters; and we have found part of it, at least, after many days. We have often "sown in tears;" but to-day "we reap in joy." It was truly affecting to hear some of the poor men say, "We cannot doubt of the goodness of God to us, seeing He has sent you to instruct us in our deplorable captivity." Others said, "When you preached to us the word of salvation, it seemed as the voice of mercy, and was a source of consolation to our souls." "How can we forget," exclaimed another, "your labours among us?" "We feel it our duty," other voices said, "to publish to our families and friends what the Methodists have done for us in prison." One poor man, holding up his Bible, said, "I will say to my wife and children, I received this book at the hands of the Methodist Missionaries, who constantly visited us in prison to the last moment of our

confinement on the Medway." Thus, with tears and thanks, these poor captives took their leave of us, to return to their native shores.

"Sept. 4.—This day was rendered memorable on board the Glory, by a code of laws which the prisoners drew up for their own government. One of the articles of that code was, 'that the Methodist Ministers be respected and encouraged.' About this time, we instituted ten schools, each containing thirty scholars, for the instruction of those who were not able to read. It was common for us to hear among the young men such words as these, "*Nous sommes les enfants de la révolution, et nous ne savons pas lire.*" 'We are the children of the revolution, and we have not learnt to read.' The number under daily instruction, in reading the holy Scriptures, was about three hundred. These schools were supported at the sole expense of a few private friends, chiefly in London."

In the month of October in this year, by the appointment of Conference, I visited the prisons at Portsmouth. The principal object of that journey was to introduce to the prisoners the Rev. William Beal, who was stationed in the Portsmouth Circuit, and who had kindly offered his valuable services to preach to the prisoners. My attention was in the first instance directed to the prison at Forton, near Gosport, where there were upwards of two thousand prisoners.

Here I preached to an attentive congregation, while Mr. Beal was zealously engaged in distributing tracts. The next scene of labour was the ships in the harbour, which contained about nine thousand prisoners. Having letters of introduction from the dépôt on the Medway, my reception was favourable. For several days I continued to visit these ships, and the people heard me with serious attention. In some of these visits, I was kindly accompanied by my esteemed friends, the Rev. J. Edmondson, the Rev. William Palmer, Mr. John Keet, and others. Mr. Edmondson preached to the Americans.

The last place I visited at this dépôt was Porchester Castle, where some thousands were confined. Having announced my intention of preaching, I soon had a large congregation in the castle yard. A prisoner lent me a table, on which I stood. The materials of the table being feeble, and much worse for wear, the poor man crept under it, and supported it with his back until I had done preaching. In the middle of my discourse, the great bell rang for dinner, which created a most lively sensation among my hearers. Some hundreds instantly left me; for the attraction of a dinner to a prisoner of war is generally much stronger than that of a discourse on the religion of the cross. Some, however, remained to the end, and expressed an earnest desire to hear me again. Having accomplished the

object of my visit, in the introduction of my friend Mr. Beal, I left him in full possession of the field, in which, I have no doubt, his labours were owned of God to the good of many souls.

I now returned to my work on the Medway, where with my much-esteemed colleague, I continued the daily routine of duty, until God said, "Let there be peace." Almost every day we heard expressions like these, "I have found the consolations of religion to be my only support during a long and painful captivity. God has been my helper. I have found your ministry to be a blessing to my soul; I am under great obligations to your society."

At length peace was restored to Europe. No language can describe the joy which this unexpected news produced among the prisoners. Cartels began to sail almost daily, with from fifty to eighty passengers. Every day we attended, and gave to each passenger a Bible, a Testament, or a religious tract. From the 15th April to the 21st of May, 1814, a considerable part of each day was spent in this delightful work. O how pleasing it was to hear the poor liberated captives say, "We are glad to possess this Bible, we will carry it home to our families; this Bible shall always remain in my family." One said, "I have nine children, do give me one for them." Others said, "You found us naked,

and you clothed us; in prison, and you visited us." We occupied a portion of each day in preaching farewell sermons on board the respective ships. My last text was, "*La paix soit avec vous.*"

From the Medway this mission extended to Portsmouth, to Stapleton, to Norman Cross, to Plymouth, and to Dartmoor, at which dépôts the Rev. Messieurs Thomas Warren, P. Le Sueur, J. Etchells, and Amice Ollivier were employed as Missionaries.

In reviewing our labours among the prisoners of war, it is natural to inquire what was the amount of good done? In reply, I hardly need say, the full amount of it cannot be ascertained in this world. That a large majority of them were utterly unconcerned about religion, is too true; but that others sustained a very different character, cannot be denied. Some died, we hope, in peace. Many hundreds were taught to read the Scriptures; great numbers of copies of the word of God were sent into France, and to all parts of the continent; and some, we had every reason to believe, obtained a degree of spiritual good, the influence of which would be felt by their families and friends at home. But I will not venture to enlarge. The good that was done, "the day of the Lord shall declare."

Out of a great number of letters received from the prisoners, while we laboured among them, as well as after their return home, I select the following, which was addressed to our Missionary Committee.

“ On board the Brunswick, Prison-ship,
“ Medway, Sept. 6, 1812.

The members composing the Committee of the prisoners of war, on board the Brunswick, to the Gentlemen composing the Methodist Missionary Committee.

“ GENTLEMEN.

“ Your Society, in sending on board our prison-ships the zealous Missionaries, Messrs. Toase and Kerpezdron, who in administering to us the consolations of religion have added more than once temporal aid, such as clothes, to those of our unhappy countrymen, on board the Sampson, who were naked, has a claim to our warmest thanks. This has come to our knowledge by those of our countrymen who have lately come from that ship to the Brunswick. By this reunion of the Officers, we have obtained this information, without which we should have remained ignorant of it, by reason of the impenetrable secrecy which exists between one prison-ship and another. The wise exhortations of these Ministers of the word of God, which have frequently proved a source of consolation to the unhappy prisoner, at the very last period of despair, have given you an eternal right to the gratitude of all the pri-

soners of war at this depôt, and particularly to that of the Officers. We are all sensible of the degree of courage that was necessary for men who were not constrained by any authority, to penetrate into these dungeons of sorrow,—where the infected air we breathe, the multitude of unhappy victims that are crowded into them, and the various diseases to which they are subject, and by which many have been hurried to the grave,—to induce them to come and spend whole days amongst us, and expose themselves to the same diseases which affect us;—the whole proves that nothing but Christian charity could produce such an effect. And the prisoners by us, and with us, return you sincere thanks for your attention to them; and beg that you will continue to us the same Christian charity, of which, we presume, we have not rendered ourselves unworthy by the attention we have paid to the instructions of your Ministers. As it has often been said, Gentlemen, that we were men without religion, without manners, and know no restraint; abandoned to all sorts of dissipation, and that the vigilance that has been exercised towards us was the consequence of our ungovernable character; among the many benefits for which we are indebted to your Society, it is not one of the least, the publication by those who came to console us, and that Providence seems to have sent to bear witness to the truth, that many of the injurious imputations that have been laid to our charge are untrue.

Among such a number of men, the greater part of them composed of the unfortunate, and born in the class of the indigent, almost reduced to a state of

nakedness and hunger, it is not surprising that some have given themselves up to commit great sins, which is in part to be attributed to the long and close confinement in which we are kept; but those, and vice in general, disappear more and more every day since you have visited us. One of the surest means, above all, to banish even the thought of vicious actions, will be to continue the instruction already begun by your Ministers, and the schools for reading and writing, under the care of men of acknowledged morality; and we flatter ourselves, that you will concur with us in the object. In a word, there is one benefit that we beg you to add to those already received, and which would perhaps be a source of infinite good; viz., to depute from your body persons well informed and impartial, to come and take an exact account of our interior regulations, the improvement that may be made, and the means proper to be adopted. We should receive this visit, Gentlemen, with so much more confidence, being convinced that Christian charity is, above all others, the motive by which you are influenced; and we doubt not that great good would result from it to the majority of the prisoners.

“ We have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

“ With the highest consideration,

“ Your very obliged servants,

“ LE BERTRE, Colonel and Che-
valier de l' Empire,

“ Vatable, Colonel, &c.”

The affliction of Mr. Mahy, and his removal from France, had long deprived the societies in Normandy of a public ministry. But as soon as peace was settled between the two countries, they were visited alternately by Messrs. De Quetteville, De Kerpezdron, Le Sueur, and Ollivier. On the return of Bonaparte from Elba, these excellent Missionaries were obliged to retire to the islands; and thus again were the little flocks at Beuville, Périères, and the Bocage left destitute of ministerial labour and pastoral care.

The battle of Waterloo terminated the struggle, and peace was once more restored to Europe. Having received an appointment at the Conference of 1815, to the Islands of Guernsey and Jersey, I had special instructions to visit France, and superintend the infant Mission in that country. In accordance with my instructions, on the 15th of October, in that year, accompanied by my late excellent brother-in-law, the Rev. Richard Robarts, and the Rev. Benjamin Frankland, I landed, for the first time, on the coast of Normandy. The following day, being Sunday, we were obliged to stay at Coutances, a small town about five miles from the place at which we landed. In the course of the evening, the lady at whose house we slept asked us if we would like a game at cards. On our immediately declining the offer, I took the opportunity to in-

form her, that we considered gaming of all kinds sinful, and still more so on the Lord's day. She apologized. I then invited the family into our room, and read and explained to them a portion of Scripture. We afterwards entered upon a religious conversation, and spent the rest of the evening in a way satisfactorily to ourselves; and I hope not unprofitably to the family. I saw the family many times after that interview, and they always retained a grateful sense of the instructions they received that evening. At length, disgusted with the errors of the Roman Catholic Church, and having no Protestant ministry in that town or neighbourhood, they left the country, and emigrated to America.

The following day, we arrived at Beuville, where we found a small society of persons truly converted to God. With this pious little flock we took sweet counsel, and at once found that we thought and spake the same thing. This evening I preached my first sermon in France, from John iii. 16. The congregation was as large as the room would contain, amounting to about eighty persons. During this journey, I endeavoured to introduce the Gospel into the ancient town of Avranché; but I met with considerable opposition. From all that I saw and heard, I returned home with a full conviction that a Missionary ought to be stationed in Normandy.

In the month of February, 1816, we had an invitation to visit Roscoffe, a village on the coast of Brittany. On the tenth of that month, Mr. Ollivier landed at St. Malo, and proceeded on his journey about fifty-five miles, when he was taken by a gens d'armes, and carried before the Mayor and committed to prison, where he spent a cold winter night on a damp floor, with a little straw for his bed. The next morning he was marched back, five leagues, to Brioux, to appear before the Préfét. Here he was examined, and cross examined. In answer to the question, "What are you?" He said, "I am a Methodist Preacher." "O," said the Préfét, "that is the sect which has made such progress in England." The Préfét ordered him to remain till Monday, and appear twice a-day. Finding him punctual the first day, an extraordinary guard was sent to conduct him to Morlaix, where the English Consul interfered, and he obtained a passport for Roscoffe. This Mission was not successful, and was soon abandoned.

Early in the year 1815, there was a promising opening for a Wesleyan Mission at Brussels. The Rev. Richard Robarts was selected by the Committee to visit that city. Having received letters of introduction, from the Rev. Dr. Steinkopffe, and other influential persons, Mr. Robarts proceeded to this new field of missionary labour,

where he met with a cordial reception from the Rev. M. Charlier, Pastor of the church and congregation assembling at *la Chapelle Royale*; and also from Mons. Mertens, an eminent merchant, who breathed a truly Christian spirit, and was very favourable to the object of Mr. Robarts's visit. Mr. Robarts says, on the subject of his arrival at Brussels, "In M. Mertens I found a Christian and a gentleman, who after inquiring into my views and object, assured me he would do all in his power to forward them. M. Charlier also coincided with my purposes, and offered me his church to preach in.* From many other Christian friends, Mr. Robarts met with great encouragement and support, so that he was enabled, during the three months he resided at Brussels, to prepare the way for a Mission in that populous and interesting city. In this promising Mission Mr. Robarts was succeeded by the Rev. Armand De Kerpezdron, who arrived there on the 9th of June; and who, soon after his arrival, says, "Having prepared several respectable French families, in private, for the reception of our doctrines and discipline, I found no ministry could be exercised without a license from the Minister of religious worship." Such a license he soon obtained; and was consequently recognized by the Dutch Government.

* See a letter from M. Charlier, in the Report for 1816.

Though the congregation was not large, the prospect of an increase was very cheering; and it is well known that his ministry was made a blessing to some of his hearers. There was, however, another opening at Mer, a central town in France; and no man who was fully qualified for that station being at liberty, M. De Kerpezdron was removed to Mer, and Brussels was left vacant. Here I cannot avoid saying, that I have always regretted the removal of the Wesleyan ministry from Brussels, as there is every reason to believe that if the same Preacher had been continued there a few years we should have had a large congregation, and a numerous society. At least this is the conviction of my mind.

In the year 1827, Robert Burdett, Esq., a sincere friend to our Mission on the Continent, who was anxious to introduce a Wesleyan Minister at Brussels, obtained permission of the Committee to take the Rev. P. Tournis, at his own expense, to Brussels. Mr. Tournis preached there with great acceptance, and the prospect of good was of the most promising kind. But Mr. Tournis was obliged to return to his station at Paris; and thus, once more, that fine field of labour was abandoned.

Still desirous of doing something for that city, Mr. Burdett began a service in his own house, which he conducted twice a week; and he had

the satisfaction of seeing some fruit of his unostentatious endeavours to do good. This pious work he continued until he was obliged to leave the place, at the time of the Belgium revolution. His persuasion, that this was a favourable opening for the Gospel, induced Mr. Burdett to pay the expenses of another Missionary from Paris and back again, in the year 1831. He also hired a room for preaching, and many attended the service. At present the place is vacant.

In the year 1817, I visited Cherbourg, a large seaport town, inhabited almost exclusively by Roman Catholics. Indeed, I could only hear of one native Protestant family in the place. Having been detained at sea all night by a dead calm, it was six o'clock on Sunday morning before I could land. Meeting with a few friends from Alderney, I preached in an upper bed-room, at ten o'clock, to a congregation of about twenty persons. In this visit, I was accompanied by my father-in-law, Mr. T. W. Dowdney, of Guernsey, and the Rev. Henry Powis, who was then stationed as one of the English Preachers in the islands. The congregations greatly increased during our stay. A lady of the place kindly offered us her large drawing-room, which we thankfully accepted. Mr. Powis preached in English, and Mr. Dowdney and I preached in French. I formed a small class, and several offered to contribute towards the support of a

Preacher. Mr. Ollivier was afterwards appointed to this station, and was successful in raising a large congregation. Why this promising field of labour was abandoned, I have never ascertained.

In the month of April, 1818, at the request of the Committee, I proceeded to Orleans and Mer: from the latter of which places many earnest requests had been made, by letter, to send a Missionary to the destitute flock in that town. As I was obliged to pass through Paris, I resolved to spend a few days there, that I might ascertain whether, in that gay and dissipated city, there was any hope of obtaining permission to preach the Gospel. In Paris I had an interview with some of the Pastors and Elders of the Protestant Church, from whom I learnt, that the number of Protestants in that metropolis was *forty thousand*; and that only three Ministers were employed in preaching to them and exercising pastoral care over them. It appeared to me, even at that time, that if we could have obtained permission to preach in Paris, there was a prospect of gathering a congregation. This was the first visit of any Wesleyan Minister to that city as a Missionary, since that of Dr. Coke and M. De Quetteville, immediately after the Revolution.

On my journey to Orleans, I passed through Angerville, where I received a hearty and affectionate reception in the family of Monsieur R.,

a young gentleman who had been a prisoner on board the *Glory*, and who had favoured our Mission from its commencement. With this family I spent three days, explaining to them privately the way of salvation, and exhorting them to make their calling and election sure. As one mark of the gratitude of the family, for the attentions which their son had received on board the *Glory*, when they found they could detain me no longer, one of them accompanied me, in their own carriage, to Orleans, a distance of thirty miles.

At Orleans, I was invited by the Pastor of the Protestant church in that town, to preach to his congregation. I readily complied, and was favoured with a large congregation, consisting of many respectable families, and a considerable number of Officers and privates of a Swiss regiment then quartered at Orleans. It was gratifying to me to hear, as I was leaving the church, many voices say, "Thank God we have heard the Gospel this evening."

On my arrival at Mer, I learned that in the town, and the surrounding villages, there were about one thousand five hundred Protestants, who were as sheep without a shepherd. I inquired how it was that they had no Minister, when I was deeply affected in receiving the following answer. "The state of our church is truly deplorable. M. Le C., a man of talent, was our Minister some years ago. He became

a Papist, and took orders in the Roman Catholic Church. His successor was an immoral man, and was dismissed. Ever since that time, we have had no Minister. Do send us a Pastor."

To this place M. De Kerpezdron was removed from Brussels. After labouring some years in connexion with the Wesleyan Conference, he thought it might be for the furtherance of the Gospel in that country, under all the existing circumstances, to accept the usual salary of the French Government, and become the settled Pastor of the congregation. There is every reason to believe, that the labours of M. De Kerpezdron have been owned of God at Mer. He has been the chief instrument in the erection of a commodious chapel, establishing a school, and in reviving the spirit of piety in that neighbourhood.

The congregations had increased considerably at Périères : and a small chapel was erected by the liberal contributions of the people, and the gratuitous labours of the stone masons of that village, and its vicinity. Our prospects of more abundant success were now of a very promising nature ; and there was a loud call for additional labourers. At the Conference of 1818, the Rev. Charles Cook was appointed to the Missionary station in Normandy. Immediately after the Conference, I met Mr. Cook in London, and we made our arrangements for the ensuing year. Mr. Cook was kindly received into the house

of the Rev. M. Rollin, Pastor of the Protestant church at Caën, where he devoted himself to the study of the French language, in order to his being able to preach with comfort to himself and acceptance to the people. On the 3d of December, in the same year, Mr. Cook preached his first sermon at Beuville: and, as I have heard, very much to the edification of his hearers.

It was now thought desirable that we should visit the Protestants in the south of France, in order to ascertain the state of religion in the celebrated vallies of Piedmont.

To this work of Christian charity, the Rev. John Hawtrey, who was then stationed at Canterbury, and myself were appointed by the Committee in London. We spent a few days in Paris, visiting friends who were supposed to be favourable to our object, and in obtaining information relative to our journey. We availed ourselves of this opportunity of calling on the celebrated Abbé Gregoire, the ci-devant Bishop of Blois. The Abbé had written a Dictionary of all Religions, in which he had given a false and wicked account of the Methodists. We told him he had greatly misrepresented us as a body. He seemed surprised, and replied, "I am very sorry; and if you will favour me with your remarks, I will correct the article in the next edition." On my return to Guernsey, I sent him

a brief history of the rise and progress of the Methodist societies. The article in the Abbé's Dictionary was translated from Lackington's Memoirs of himself!

All things were now prepared; our places were taken in the diligence, and we were ready to start, when news reached Paris, that the south was in a state of great political agitation; and the most judicious of our friends considered, that our labour would be lost *at that time*, and advised us to wait for a more favourable opportunity. After much deliberation and prayer, we decided to postpone our journey.

The remainder of the time allowed for this visit to France, I spent in the villages of Beuville, Périères, and Cherbourg; and Mr. Hawtrey returned to his station at Canterbury. The journey to the south was afterwards taken by the Rev. Charles Cook, accompanied by the Rev. M. Rollin. See the Report of the Parent Society for 1820, App., pages 99-106.

At the Conference of 1820 the Rev. John Hawtrey was appointed to Paris. On the 28th of April, in that year, the first District Meeting ever held in France assembled at Périères; when there were present, W. Toase, Chairman; Amice Ollivier, J. Hawtrey, Charles Cook, and Henry De Jersey. To the 11th question of that meeting, "What is our opinion relative to the actual

state and prospects of the different Missionary stations in this District," the following answer was given:—

“ With regard to Paris, we feel deeply concerned to state, that in this metropolis very little regard is paid to real religion. The Protestant Pastors do not appear to take any interest in our cause; and have, with few exceptions, treated our brother with neglect. We are happy, nevertheless, to be able to state, that brother Hawtrey is in the habit of regularly preaching every Wednesday and Lord’s day to a small congregation of attentive hearers, from which we are encouraged to hope that, unless the authorities should interfere, good will eventually result. Our brother has laboured under many difficulties: having been visited with great sickness in his family, and for want of introductions has been unable to form those acquaintances in Paris which he had hoped would have been useful to the Mission. The habitual breach of the Sabbath, which prevails in this place to a most awful degree, has also been a very great hindrance to the prosperity of the work. But we are thankful to God for what has been done, and consider the prospects in that capital as not unpromising; from which we are led to hope, that in the course of time our cause will be established there.

“*Beuville*.—At this place the preaching-house is well filled: there has been an addition of three members to the society. We have reason to believe that several others are awakened, but have been prevented from meeting in class by the reproach of the cross, which prevails to a very high degree in this country.

“*Périères*.—The congregations at this place are good; the little society is in a prosperous state, and there are evident marks of an increasing attention to the ministry of the word. In addition to the above places, we have preaching at two other villages; at Cresserons, about two miles from Périères, where we preach to a congregation of about one hundred persons, and at Courcelle, nine miles distant, where we have about eighty hearers, and where they are building a neat little chapel, which will principally be supplied by us.

“*Condé*.—We still have free access to the Protestant churches at Condé, St. Honorine, Frêne, Montilly, Atisse, and Montauban, in all which places we are received with much apparent affection, and a continuance of our labours is earnestly desired.

“*Mer*.—We hear with pleasure, that our brother Kerpezdron has received the sanction of Government, authorizing him to preach to the congregations at Mer; and from his communica-

tions with brother Hawtrey, we learn, that the number of his hearers is increasing, and that his prospects are very good.

“ *Cherbourg.*—We are happy to state, that the prospects of our brother Ollivier are very encouraging ; the congregations vary from sixty to one hundred and twenty persons. It appears that, in addition to those whose names have been returned as members of our society, a few of his hearers have been deeply awakened. We have the fullest persuasion that our cause is well established in that town, and, with the divine blessing upon our brother’s labours, expect soon to see greater things than these in that neighbourhood.

“ *Question 12th.*—What is the opinion of this meeting relative to brother Cook’s report of his journey to the south of France ?

“ *Answer.*—After having^{*} deliberately considered the details of his journey, we recommend the stations he has mentioned to the particular attention of the Committee and Conference.

“ On the whole, it is evident that God is preparing the way for the general spread of true religion throughout the country.

“ Our opinion rests upon the following grounds: An increasing conviction in the public mind of the necessity of a spiritual and influential religion. The actual success which has already attended our endeavours, so far as we have been

permitted by the authorities to exercise our ministry. The great and increasing influence of free-schools, conducted on liberal principles. The establishment of a Bible Society at Paris. The recent and indubitable conversion of several persons, Deists and others, by the reading of the Scriptures, and the instruments that God has already raised up in this country, and the success that evidently attends their efforts to promote the extension of the Redeemer's kingdom. To this we may add, the apparent disposition on the part of Government to maintain religious toleration. As an instance of this, Mr. Ollivier has recently received authority from the Minister of the Interior, to exercise his ministry in the town of Cherbourg, as a Protestant Minister. Before this, he was not allowed to officiate to a congregation of more than nineteen persons; but he has lately entered upon a room capable of containing at least two hundred. Mr. Kerpezdron has also received authority to exercise his ministry at Mer, near Orleans."

The first love-feast ever known in France, was held at Périères, on Sunday, April 30th, 1820. Present, all the Preachers who composed the District meeting. A lady, who was one of its members, has kindly furnished the following sketch of that interesting and affecting meeting: "At the time appointed, I presented myself to be admitted to the first love-feast ever held in

France. The building was an old chateau: I ascended the spacious staircase, and was shown into a large lofty room, which no doubt was intended by the architect for a drawing-room, but now converted into a Bethel. The sun shining in meridian splendour on the white stone floor, and the white-washed walls, produced a dazzling light, yet not equal to the light and glory displayed by the faithful few therein assembled; not to fill, but to adorn the room. Five Ministers, Messrs. Toase, Ollivier, Cook, Hawtrey, and De Jersey, being convened together for their District meeting, and, I think, about twelve other persons, chiefly French Methodists, formed the assembly. A few moments elapsed, that all might be present before the commencement of the service. My thoughts wandered; where am I? In France. What are we met for? to speak of our spiritual wants, or our spiritual enjoyments. Who are these? The Rev. W. Toase arose, and opened the meeting with an appropriate hymn, in which all joined in softest harmony; another Minister prayed with all the fervour of a renewed heart, full of faith and love. Already the influence of the Holy Spirit was felt, like the gentle drops before the shower, softening and mellowing our hearts into holy feeling; and when rising from our knees, the chastened smile of joy sat on every face.

“After a short introduction on the nature and origin of love-feasts, Mr. Toase began by giving a brief outline of his own experience, and an encouraging request, that the French friends would favour us with an account of their conversion to God. All were anxious to begin, the fire burned within them; they longed to show that they also had received the same grace; but with true Christian feeling looked to the oldest member among them to begin. She arose with the dignity of a Christian matron, softened by the feeling of humility. The account widow Mahy gave of the gradual opening of her mind, and the Spirit’s cry in her heart, after peace and solid comfort, before she heard of Methodist Missionaries, was very interesting; but her description of the joy she felt when walking on the beach, her favourite spot for meditation and prayer, at the very moment when she was imploring the Most High, that he would send her some one to show her the path of life, was truly affecting. A person came and told her that two Missionaries were arrived, who would no doubt do her good: her heart bounded with joy at the news. She heard the word of truth, received it with implicit confidence and faith, and was made exceedingly happy in the Lord. Her heart had been previously prepared, that she might be a source of encouragement to those

disinterested men, who thought not their lives dear unto themselves, so that they might win souls to Christ. She expatiated much on the marked Providence in her behalf, with all the eloquence of artless simplicity and holy fervour. A poor woman next arose, worn down with age and hard labour, the tears of joy trickled down her furrowed cheeks, saying, 'O my dearest friends, I, a poor ignorant sinner, (though I cannot speak like sister Mahy,) have been made happy; the grace of God has enlightened my dark mind, and made my hard heart soft; and I am looking with longing desire for my Saviour to call me to himself: but I was not led like sister Mahy; I groaned long, and shed many bitter tears before I found peace. I well remember,' added she, 'when I was in that state, going to the mill one morning, with a sack of corn on my back, being met by a person who said to me, Poor woman, you are too much loaded. Ah! my outward load was nothing compared to the load of my sins on my guilty conscience. But Jesus, my precious Saviour, had mercy upon me, and I feel I am his.' This was said with so much feeling, it was impossible to hear it unmoved, or not to ascribe glory to God and the Lamb for ever.

"The language of Christians is the same every where; and though a small number, the various states, from the babe in Christ to the matured

father, were exemplified, although chiefly composed of females, some of whom evinced strong intellect and deep experience.

“ I shall only name another, who made a strong impression on my mind. Mademoiselle Lucas, when she arose, like a star of great attraction, the stillness of expectation pervaded the meeting. ‘ I live,’ said she, ‘ above the world; it has now no charms for me. I draw my happiness from the source of felicity itself; Jehovah is the portion of my soul; his will is my delight: whatever I am called to pass through or give up, I ask myself, Is it the will of God? and it is done.’ She said much more in the same language of true devotedness, but with deep humility, literally appearing as nothing in her own eyes; but the grace of God shone with indescribable lustre.—Time flew apace.”

Mr. Hawtrey continuing to meet with discouragements in Paris, arising in a great measure from the unsettled state of political affairs, removed at the ensuing Conference to Périères, where his valuable services were duly appreciated by our pious people in that and the adjoining villages.

In the course of the year 1820, a favourable opening appeared for introducing the Gospel into St. Servans and St. Malo. James Macculloch, Esq., Treasurer of the Wesleyan Missionary Society for the Guernsey District, took a residence at Four à Chaux, near St. Servans, and

opened his house for preaching. The labours of the Rev. Messrs. Thomas, Brown, and Harvie, were made very useful. A large room was afterwards hired, and fitted up for a chapel, and a numerous congregation was collected. This place did, unquestionably, promise much fruit. But, I am sorry to say, this hopeful station was soon abandoned. Had the judicious counsels, and prudent zeal of Mr. Macculloch, who has a perfect knowledge of France, and whose liberality to the French Mission can never be forgotten, been promptly seconded, and acted upon, we should now have had, I think, a flourishing cause in those populous towns.

In 1821 Mr. Cook was stationed in the south of France, while Mr. De Kerpezdron laboured at Mer, and Messrs. De Jersey and Tournis in Normandy. In the Report of the Parent Society for that year, pages 24-27, there is an interesting account of Mr. Cook's travels and labours in an extensive tract of that country. As one instance only of the manner in which he was received, I select the following: "The news of the arrival of a Protestant Missionary," says Mr. Cook, "having reached many of the villages, I had not less than nine hundred hearers. Every where there was a disposition to hear. Neither the hills which were covered with snow, nor the pelting of the winter storm, prevented multitudes, both male and female, from travelling on

foot many miles to hear the glad tidings of salvation." But I must refer to the Report itself.

The Report for 1822 states, that the Rev. W. O. Croggon was added to the list of French Missionaries, and that the prospects of success became more and more encouraging. The congregations were large, and many were awakened and converted to God.

The year 1823 was somewhat remarkable for a favourable opening for preaching at Charenton, near Paris. At that place there was a large iron foundery, belonging to a company of English gentlemen, which was carried on by English workmen. A request was made to the Missionary Committee for a Preacher, accompanied with an offer on the part of the proprietors to pay the expenses of such an appointment. This request was complied with, and the Rev. W. O. Croggon was stationed there. The following year the Rev. J. H. Adams succeeded Mr. Croggon in the English work, and the Rev. P. Tourgis was appointed to preach to the French inhabitants of that place, and to endeavour to revive our defunct cause in Paris. Mr. Adams continued at this station with great acceptance to the people till the establishment was broken up, and the workmen returned home. During this year Mr. Tourgis succeeded in raising a French congregation in Paris; and now more san-

guine hopes of success were entertained in that capital.

By my revoval to the Bristol Circuit, in 1822, I ceased to be connected with the French Mission. But having then been engaged for twelve years in preaching to the people of that nation, nearly five of which were spent in the prison-ships on the Medway, and afterwards accustomed to visit France in my regular course of ministerial duty, I became deeply interested in that work, and ever since I have felt an anxious solicitude for its success. On the labours of departed years I have cast merely a passing glance. I could have written volumes on the subject. But I have selected, from a mass of materials now before me in manuscript, just what I have thought sufficient to show that the Wesleyan Mission originated with God; and has, from the beginning, been favoured with evident proofs of his approbation and blessing. On the present state of the Mission I shall take leave to say a few words.

The Mission at Paris has had to struggle with difficulties such as no one can enter into, unless he reside on the spot, and have a competent knowledge of local circumstances. Revolutions and counter-revolutions, together with great ignorance among the people of our design in visiting that country, and high-wrought prejudice, encouraged and strengthened by some of our own

countrymen who reside there, and by others who occasionally visit that metropolis, as well as by persons who have pretended to advocate our cause, have all conspired to retard the work of God among that gay and trifling people. After the revival of this Mission by the instrumentality of the Rev. P. Tourgis, a room was taken for preaching in la Rue St. Dennis, as well as one in the Fauxbourg Mont Martre. To these was afterwards added the little chapel now occupied in la Rue Bouloy. These places were fitted up chiefly at the expense of Robert Burdett, Esq., assisted by a few of his personal friends. To that gentleman, who has for many years been an accredited member of the Wesleyan society, the cause of Missions on the European continent is under great obligations. No man has been more concerned for his countrymen residing in France than Mr. Burdett.

It was not till after many and urgent requests had been laid before the Committee, that they agreed to station an English Preacher in Paris, to preach to those of our countrymen in that metropolis who had expressed a willingness to hear, and a determination to support, such a ministry. The appointment of the Rev. R. Newstead to that field of labour appears already to have been beneficial to the general cause. Viewing this appointment in connexion with our French work, which, it is admitted, is *our first*

and *most important* duty, such an establishment is likely to be useful.

At Lille we have now no Missionary stationed. Since the Rev. Theophilus Marzials became Pastor of the Protestant church in that town, it has been found less necessary to continue the labours of a Preacher there, especially as that gentleman is piously and zealously engaged in promoting the same common cause with ourselves; and so many other and more necessitous places, where the Gospel was not preached, called for our help.

In the ancient and neighbouring town of Calais we have two small places of worship; one in the Haute Ville, the other in the Basse Ville. A note which I have just received from the Rev. John Beecham, one of the General Secretaries, states the time and circumstances of the opening of the chapel in the Haute Ville.

“77, Hatton Garden, November 26, 1834.

DEAR BROTHER,

It was on Sunday, the 14th of July, 1833, that I preached at Calais. The chapel was well filled, and a handsome collection was made in the English fashion—(boxes carried round the congregation)—towards meeting the deficiency in fitting up the new chapel in the Haute Ville. It was intended that I should preach in the new chapel; but permission had not at that time been given by the municipal autho-

rities, therefore I opened the *new* chapel in the *old* one. I know not that I need give you any further particulars respecting this visit. I would only remind you that my principal object in visiting Calais at that time was that I might have an opportunity of judging for myself, as to the opening among the English inhabitants, judging on the principle we adopted in reference to Paris, that if we could establish our English cause in Calais, that would help to promote the French work. This I have no doubt has been the case.

I may add, that, having preached at Calais on Sunday, the 14th of July, I reached home in time to have a Committee meeting on the 17th of July: at which meeting I gave an account of the state and prospects of Calais; and the Committee agreed, on my recommendation, to send an English Preacher there, in addition to the French one, without delay.

I am yours affectionately,

JOHN BEECHAM.

In the month of October last, accompanied by Mr. William Herbert, of Tottenham, and Mr. D. Birt, of Southwark, I visited Calais, and preached to a respectable congregation. The prospect appeared to me to be favourable. The labours of the Rev. James Mole are very acceptable and useful among the English residents; and Mr. Rennier has had seals to his ministry among the native French. *Bologne* has recently been added to this station, and promises to repay the labour bestowed upon it by Messrs. Mole and Carr.

The erection of a chapel at Landemeure, in the *Calvados Circuit*, is a very encouraging feature in that mission. At *Condé*, another of the principal places in that station, the society was doubled in the course of last year. Even among the Roman Catholics in one part of that vicinity there is a considerable religious movement. A letter now before me, dated “*Condé*, Nov. 27, 1834,” says, “The Lord has heard the prayers and the sighs of his faithful people in behalf of France, and his cause now begins to prosper.”

In the south of France, the fields have long been white unto the harvest. The accounts transmitted from time to time, by the Missionaries there, are of the most encouraging nature. Many have been truly converted to God; and the work is distinguished by great fervour of spirit and depth of piety; and has already been powerfully influential in its bearing upon other churches. Who can listen to the appeal made by the District Meeting in behalf of the inhabitants of the *Upper Alps*, and remain indifferent to the French mission?

“This interesting station was first visited by Brother De Jersey from Lourmarin, in the autumn of 1832. During his short stay in the Valleys, he formed a first class of five or six persons, who have persevered to the present time. In answer to repeated and earnest invitations, Brother Louis Rostan visited them in the two

first months of the present year. During his stay, the Valleys were favoured with a gracious effusion of the Spirit of God. Since we have met at Paris, the Clergyman and Pastor of these Valleys (himself a witness of the power and faithfulness of God to save to the uttermost) has written to Brother Rostan, that, since his visit, the good work has gone on without diminution. He informs us, that in six small villages, the whole of the young persons, without exception, from fifteen years of age and upwards, profess to seek salvation, or to have found it. Thirteen class-meetings have been formed in thirteen different villages: some of these contain more than fifteen members each. To the question, what they would do towards the support of a Missionary, one of these poor but warm-hearted mountaineers replied, 'I will give a sheep;' another, 'I will give a measure of wheat;' and a third, 'I will give *all that I can*.' We think it highly important that *immediate* attention should be paid to this opening, the most promising that we have ever yet had."

To this statement the last official District letter adds,—*Piedmont*, mentioned last year, is still open to us, and is waiting for a Missionary. The following letter, written from St. John, Lucerne, though published in the last year's Report, addressed to the Rev. H. De Jersey, I cannot refuse a place here, as it shows how

anxious the inhabitants of those interesting Valleys are to receive a Wesleyan Missionary.

“ Allow me now, my dear brother, to remind you of what we conversed upon during your stay with us, viz., that you acknowledged the want we had of a Missionary, and that you would write to your Society on the subject. Yes, beloved, we need that some one should come to our help! ‘There are difficulties in the way which prevent the accomplishment of your wishes, such as the prohibition made to foreigners to preach in our Valleys.’ But since the permission to hold our meetings, granted us by the King, after the sentence of our banishment, we have not been molested, although several Englishmen, who have visited us, have exhorted in our meetings. And if he who should venture to exercise his ministry among us were to be sentenced to punishment on that account, even that would, in the hands of the Almighty, turn out for the furtherance of the Gospel. O do send us a Minister, with whom we could confer on the best means to be employed for the progress of the work of God in this country! May the Lord in his goodness put it into your heart to do so, and give you to feel its necessity. There is much to engage you to it. Have you not been among us, and seen yourself how much we need a faithful labourer? ‘If the work of God here has been hitherto carried on without a

Minister, it is now come to that point that one is absolutely necessary. Do, well-beloved brother, consider this matter in the sight of God.'"

A few extracts from the journal of my much-esteemed friend, Captain Bazin, Master of the *Ariadne* steam-packet, from Southampton to the Channel Islands and France, will show the state of feeling at St. Malo, St. Servans, Granville, &c., in reference to the Scriptures and religious instruction.

During the summer season, Captain Bazin, on the return of every voyage, distributes Bibles and religious tracts, both in the towns and villages, and frequently takes a Preacher with him; and laying his beautiful vessel alongside the quay, has public service on the deck.

Numerous congregations attend, and already much good has been done.

"After many inquiries at St. Malo," says Captain B., "we found great difficulty in obtaining a suitable room for preaching. The women, being particularly under the influence of their Priests, from the fear of not obtaining absolution, will not permit their husbands to let their rooms.

"But on the 19th June, 1834, having Mr. Le Sueur, one of the Rev. Mr. Perrot's assistants, with me, as we were inquiring for a room, we entered at *La Descente de Normandie*, a lodging-house. I entered a large bed-room, that could

hold from forty to fifty persons. I asked if she had any objection to let us preach in it. She answered, "No." We therefore had a promise for our future voyages, it being too late for that voyage."

"*July 10, 1834.* At seven, A.M., we started from Jersey, and arrived at Granville at noon. We hoisted the Bethel flag, for preaching at six, P. M., and immediately began our conversation and distribution on board, on the quay, in the town, &c. We invited the Officers and soldiers of the regiment quartered there. At six, P. M., the Major and a few of the Officers, and several of their men, attended, with some of the townspeople, so as to fill our quarter-deck, and a good number on the pier. Mr. Le S. began the service: after singing, he offered up a solemn, impressive prayer, when the Rev. Mr. Messervy read a portion of Scripture, preached a very solemn and suitable sermon, and concluded with singing and prayer. We distributed tracts to all present. After service, the Major introduced me to the Officers; one of them expressed his satisfaction, and told me of his intention to punish one of his men that had behaved irreverently. I entreated for the man, and said that it was very probable he had never before attended such a service; that he might speak to him on the impropriety of making light of sacred things, but by no means to punish him;

and that we wanted to show the nature of true Christianity by kindness and love. He answered, that if his men attended they should behave with propriety. After a short, but interesting conversation he invited me to dine with him.

“ *Friday, July 11th, 1834.* Mr. Messervy gave me the following copy of a letter, in reply, from the Préfét of the department, to one addressed to him by the Rev. Mr. Messervy, then at Coutance, with a view to obtain his permission for selling and distributing religious books, and extending his spiritual labours in that department.

“ ‘ Sir,—The authorization you request from me would not protect you from the municipal authorities, if it were necessary. The law of the 16th February last, concerning the public criers, is precise in this respect. But you neither need the one nor the other. The law here referred to is not applicable, in fact, to the sale of the Bible and religious and moral books. The Mayors will therefore conform themselves to the spirit of the law, as well as to the intention of Government, and will put no obstacle to the sale of religious books. You may, therefore, Sir, with confidence, continue to distribute, either in town or country, the holy Scriptures and the other religious books which you are in the habit of distributing.

“ ‘ Receive, Sir, the assurance of my perfect consideration.—Le Préfét,—GALTIER.’

“*July 24.* We visited several of our old friends, and met with a kind reception everywhere. We had a very edifying conversation with Madame C., the first-fruit of our labours in St. Malo. She told us what she had felt under the prayer of Mr. N. de Jersey, who had been at St. Malo with his family, on account of his son’s illness; and informed us of the benefit her doctor had received by her having lent him a Bible, and other religious books, which I had given her for the use of her family and friends. She also related to us the many conversations they had together about me, and my conversation with her, and his wish to see me. At that moment the doctor entered the shop, and we therefore had the privilege of conversing with him; and we invited him to attend our evening service, which he did, and was highly gratified. He expressed his desire to have a Bible, which I promised to send him.

“In the evening, the doctor, and a young lady from Madame C., with thirteen more, attended our meeting. They were attentive, expressed their satisfaction, and promised to make it known that we intended to continue distributing more tracts. We left a few Bibles and Prayer-Books at the custom-house, and a few other books to be lent.

“*Friday, July 25th.* Monsieur le Curé de St. Malo, having sent by the brigadier for me to

lend him some of our books, I sent him, some time ago, one Bible, one Testament, and a parcel of our best tracts; and also a parcel to Monsieur H., the Mayor. I asked the gentlemen of the police what the Priest said of our books, and of what we were doing. They said that several of the Priests had read them, and said they were good.

“It is a pleasant reflection, that whereas some years ago the Bible was dragged in contempt through the streets of Paris, now there is printing in that city one hundred thousand copies of it, and a new edition of Sacy. The Bishop of S., and six other gentlemen, have sent me their names as subscribers, by way of encouraging the printing, and inducing the nobility and the people to read the holy Scriptures. I have already brought over sixty-eight numbers of each Bible.

“*Tuesday, November 4th, 1834.* Early in the morning we began our distribution through the streets and quays, telling the people of our meeting. After breakfast we distributed at the Custom-house several of the discourses delivered on the opening of the Evangelical chapel at Havre. We distributed largely in the Corn-market to the country-people. It being market-day, and most of the douaniers and police being on duty, there were but few that came to the service. We gave out that the service would

commence at seven o'clock in the evening. We then took some hundreds of tracts, sermons, and commandments in sheets, and went into the country, to see Marie and Margueritte G., two sisters we had heard of, distributing right and left as we went, speaking on the subject of our books to all. We at last came to the house near La Maison Taller, and found the mother and daughter-in-law at home, who received us kindly. They accepted several of our books for distribution among their neighbours, and expressed their regret that Marie and Margueritte were not at home. Mr. P. read to them. We were much pleased with our visit. They invited us to come again. Passing by a lodging-house, we gave books to several in the house, it being dinner-time, and to those we met on the road. On our passing that way again, many came after us for more: a Priest and a farmer were together: the Priest sent the farmer forward, and himself sat down on the road side. I kept back, and gave the sermon on 'Salvation by Faith' to the man. The Priest advanced, and took the book from him, and came on reading it as he followed us.

"One of the distributors says, 'At Dol, Villedieu, and Vire, I have distributed great numbers of different sorts of books, which were received with eagerness.

"At Condé in Normandy, where our friends

the Wesleyans have a place of worship, I did the same, and in all the above places I received much encouragement; and in the latter place, Condé, I found them in a very encouraging state. One circumstance, which I mention with pleasure, happened while I was there. On Sunday evening, after divine service, I met with a pious family and other friends. We passed the evening in singing the praises of God, reading portions of his sacred word, and offering ourselves to God in prayer. A gentleman and his lady, of the Papist persuasion, who had passed the evening with us, made several remarks, and asked many questions on religion. They acknowledged their surprise, and, at the same time, manifested their most sincere approbation of what they had seen and heard;—the lady in particular, with tears in her eyes, observed, that she had never met before in such company, and said, ‘By what I had heard of Protestants, I thought they were people without religion or morals, and with whom we ought not to have any intercourse; but I must acknowledge that I find them very different; your house is a little heaven, and I must say that I had never seen such piety, not even amongst the most devoted of our religion.’ Next morning we met again at breakfast, and the first thing the lady said, was, that she could not sleep during the night; that she had been thinking on the evening’s conversation, and said,

‘My mind is quite perplexed; I wish I was as happy as you are in your devotions. I gave her several tracts, such as I thought suitable for her present state; and the landlord gave her a Testament, exhorting them to read it with prayer and meditation. After two hours’ more conversation and prayer to Almighty God, for his blessing upon them, we parted with much affection. I then visited most of Mr. Le Lièvre’s friends, who appear to be united in the bonds of peace and love. On quitting them, I visited many Protestants in the neighbourhood of Condé, and continued my distribution through Fincheley, St. Sverd, and Fonténermont, &c. Such has been my itinerancy through a part of France, depending upon the divine blessing on our labour of love.’” Captain Bazin adds,

“The following is the substance of a letter sent to me by one of my passengers.—‘On the evening of the day on which we arrived, we were attracted to the cottage of an interesting woman, who welcomed us with the pleasing courtesy of the French peasantry. We had an interesting conversation with two sisters, Marie and Margueritte, living together with their mother. We left the tract entitled ‘Le Curé de Mont d’Or.’ They invited us to visit them again; on the following day we called; found that the tract had been read by several of the neighbours and friends of the sisters, and that they were eager

for more. After this we held constant intercourse with Marie and Margueritte, who not being able to read, some of our party read a tract daily to them. A faithful Clergyman of the Church of England (who formed one of our party,) visited them every second day, for the purpose of reading and expounding the Scriptures. To him the sisters became peculiarly attached, and listened with deep attention to his instructions. After reading various portions of Scripture, Marie said one day to him, 'You never read or say any thing of the Virgin Mary;'—he replied, that the word of God told us that she was a highly-favoured woman, but only a creature, requiring a Saviour as well as others; reading at the same time the passages, John ii. 4, 'Woman, what have I to do with thee?' and Luke i. 47, 'My spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.' This seemed to satisfy her. One evening, after reading the third chapter of St. John, and a tract which greatly affected them, Margueritte said, with much earnestness and weeping, 'The Lord has sent you to teach us: we are poor and ignorant.' Marie said, 'When I lie awake at night, I think of nothing but what you have been telling me.' They parted from us with much affection and deep feeling.

“‘The tracts were read with great attention in five families in the neighbourhood. Two

carters took tracts one day before a Priest, who demanded them from the men, but they refused to give them up.

“ ‘From what we have seen in this part of France, we cannot doubt that God has honoured and blessed the many Christian efforts made by Captain B., of the *Ariadne*, to set the Saviour before the people ; by the distribution of the Scriptures, tracts, &c. ; by the preaching of the word of God ; and by French Preachers, carried over by him from Jersey. It was with great satisfaction that we always heard his name pronounced with respect and kindness by the people ; and we gladly bear this conscientious testimony to the work in which he appears to be made by his Lord and Master so honoured an instrument.’ ”

This sketch of the Wesleyan Mission in France, and among the French prisoners of war, is now before the public. I could with ease have greatly enlarged it, having in my possession ample materials for a volume, instead of a pamphlet. I hope, however, enough has been said to convince every impartial reader that the French Mission is worthy of encouragement and support. My object has been to lay before the Wesleyan Missionary Society a plain narration of facts ; and I have studied to do this in a way as little expensive to the reader as possible.

The appointment of English Preachers to Paris, Calais, and Bologne I have already spoken of as having been called for and judicious. I have done so, first, because many of the English residents there were extremely anxious for such an appointment, and promised to support it to the utmost of their ability; and, secondly, because I think its influence on the French work will be beneficial. But, at the same time, I beg to remind my readers, THAT OUR GRAND CALL IN FRANCE IS TO THE FRENCH PEOPLE. From long experience, and, I may be allowed to add, many years' acquaintance with the peculiar circumstances of France, my full conviction is, that a pious, plain, and laborious ministry will ultimately succeed in that country.

It cannot but be gratifying to all who have hitherto supported that Mission to know, that, in addition to the direct and positive good which, under the divine blessing, it has already accomplished, it has exercised a salutary influence in the establishment of Bible Societies, Tract Societies, and Sunday-schools in various parts of that country. "It is," says the Report of the Parent Society, "a circumstance as cheering as it is extraordinary, that the French Government has given a new impulse to education by the introduction of the New Testament into all the elementary schools of that kingdom, which embrace two millions of children." In addition to

this, another circumstance, highly favourable to the Mission, ought not to be overlooked. A few years ago the law did not allow us to preach to more than nineteen persons at one time; whereas now we have full liberty to preach to as many as we can gather together.

And now I ask, shall we relax in this work of Christian charity? A work which in so peculiar a manner originated with God, and was preserved alive during a long and demoralizing war; and that too in the absence of all ministerial labour and pastoral care.

To my mind, at least, this shows that God intended that the light which was carried to the coast of Normandy by John Angel, and the venerable De Quetteville, should enlighten all France. When France was our enemy, we visited her sons in prison, and in their state of captivity we offered them the liberty of the Gospel; and now, when she receives us into her houses and her homes, and bids us God speed, shall we feel less concerned than we then did, for the salvation of her thirty millions of souls?

The intense anxiety which pervades the minds of various denominations of our fellow-Christians in England, and which induces them to devote their attention, and a part of their resources, to the revival of religion among the Protestants and other inhabitants of France, and the cordial welcome, and co-operation of many pious French

Ministers on the spot, should stimulate us to renewed energy.

To those persons, who knew Paris fifteen or twenty years ago, the organization of a Wesleyan Missionary Society in that capital is as much a matter of astonishment as it is a subject of fervent gratitude to Almighty God.

I have now done what I have long believed to be my duty. In writing this narrative, I have endeavoured to state the truth with as much clearness and brevity as I could. The result I leave with God.

To my Brethren in the ministry,—to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee,—to the Wesleyan Missionary Society at large,—and to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity,—I beg, in conclusion, to say, Let the tears and the prayers of thousands from the *Upper Alps*, from the *Valleys of Piedmont*, and from the borders of *Spain*,—the descendants of those martyrs in the cause of the Reformation, “whose blood was the seed of the church,” and who are now, as with one voice, crying, “Come over and help us!”—cheer and encourage us in an enterprise so laudable as the revival of true religion in FRANCE.

